

VIDEO REMARKS

OF

WILLIAM MERCER
ACTING ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

DELIVERED TO THE

OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS
TRIBAL JUSTICE AND SAFETY
TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SESSION

ON

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PRIOR LAKE, MN

On behalf of Attorney General Gonzales, I would like to welcome all of you to our second tribal training and technical assistance session. I know you are all very busy in your communities and I appreciate you taking the time for what I am sure will be a productive three days.

I would like to thank the Department of Justice staff and our partners at the Departments of Interior and Health and Human Services for their hard work in putting together this session. Also, I would like to acknowledge Chairman Stanley Crooks of the Shakopee-Mdewakanton Sioux Tribe and thank him for hosting these sessions in Prior Lake, Minnesota.

Also, I want to express my gratitude to the many tribal leaders that are here. You are our partners. We want to learn from you about the challenges facing your

) communities and how we can better work together to strengthen tribal justice and safety.

I regret that I could not be there in person but am glad to be able to participate this way. OJP's Assistant Attorney General, Regina Schofield, and her senior staff will brief me on the lessons learned and the information shared at this session.

All of us at the Department of Justice take our responsibility to tribal communities very seriously. During my time as the United States Attorney for Montana, I have had the privilege of working with tribal leaders on key law enforcement and criminal justice issues. I also had the opportunity to visit the reservations in Montana and learn about law enforcement and public safety challenges first

hand. These experiences and lessons have stayed with me and are of great value in my current position as Acting Associate Attorney General.

I learned a great deal from holding community forums on Montana's reservations and listening to observations by tribal members about the biggest obstacles to achieving public safety. I adopted a tribal liaison program and assigned my Indian Country Assistant U.S. Attorneys to make quarterly visits to the six reservations where we have primary responsibility to prosecute felony offenses. The purpose of the visits is to interact with tribal law enforcement agents, the tribal government officials, health care providers, social service providers, tribal prosecutors and judges, and other stockholders. This communication and the relationships it cultivates are very

) important to our work and the ability to develop effective partnerships for public safety in Indian Country. And, frankly, these relationships and the training associated with this outreach leads to successful investigations and prosecutions which are important to victims of crime on Montana's reservations.

) Attorney General Gonzales has made partnerships with tribal communities a priority. In fact, it was almost exactly one year ago that he visited the Yakama Reservation in Washington state. He met with tribal leaders and learned first hand about the key law enforcement and criminal justice issues in Indian Country.

) While at Yakama the Attorney General also announced two new tribal justice initiatives. One was a meth investigation training program for tribal law

) enforcement. The other was a cold case review initiative, where unsolved tribal homicide cases would be revisited using the latest in forensic technology.

) Much has happened since then, and I am proud to say that the Department of Justice, working with our federal partners, has provided steady leadership in bolstering tribal law enforcement.

) A few months ago we launched the new Tribal Justice and Safety in Indian Country Web Site, www.tribalsafetyandjustice.gov. The site provides timely and comprehensive information on tribal initiatives throughout the Department. We hope that it will prove to

be an essential resource for tribal governments and communities.

The training and technical assistance workshops will cover many critical issues, such as suicide prevention, Information sharing, the Adam Walsh Act, Criminal History Record Improvement, Suicide Prevention Strategies, Methamphetamine, Drug Endangered Children, Youth Courts, Detention Facilities, and other law enforcement and criminal justice issues and how the Department of Justice can partner with the Departments of Health and Human Services and Interior in making grants and training more accessible.

What ties all of these issues together is our goal to help tribes build their capacity to strengthen their law

enforcement and criminal justice systems. To do this we need to break the barriers to resources, information, and training that have impeded our work in Indian Country for far too long. These consultation sessions are very important so that we can better understand your needs and concerns.

Together we must all work toward developing a strategic, coordinated response to tribal crime and substance abuse. Together we must ensure that members of every tribe can live in safety and peace.

Again, I emphasize that we at the Department of Justice are here to learn from you, the tribal representatives. You know the issues facing your communities. You know what steps we can take together. Please share that with us,

both at this session and any other opportunity you may have.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate. I hope the next three days will be informative and productive. I wish you all the best.